



*United States Attorney*

**U.S. Department of Justice**

*Eastern District of Virginia*

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## **News Release**

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FOR FURTHER

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Attorney General John Ashcroft and Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced today the arrest of at least 92 individuals as part of a large-scale, anti-terrorism, airport security initiative. These individuals lied on their applications to obtain restricted access security badges, or were not otherwise eligible for badges, at the Dulles International and Ronald Reagan Washington National airports where they were employed. The charges are detailed in indictments returned by a federal grand jury on Thursday, April 18, 2002. The charges include Social Security fraud, falsifying criminal history records, and immigration fraud. A number of those arrested are subject to deportation for immigration violations. In addition, a number of individuals were arrested as fugitives from justice on state charges.

Under Secretary of Transportation for Security John Magaw and officials from nine agencies, who formed a task force to undertake this initiative, participated in the announcement:

- \$ Federal Bureau of Investigation
- \$ U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Inspector General
- \$ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Inspector General
- \$ Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General
- \$ U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service
- \$ U.S. Customs Service

\$ U.S. Marshals Service  
\$ Virginia State Police

\$ Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority Police

The Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles also participated in this operation.

In December 2001, the task force was established to determine if employees working at the airports obtained their restricted access badges via fraud or material false statements. Employment records for all employees who held Security Identification Display Area (SIDA) badges were examined to determine the veracity of the information they contained. SIDA badges are required to obtain access to secure areas within the airport. The badges are obtained by employees based on information they provide when they apply for the badge.

Records for approximately 15, 000 individuals working at Dulles International Airport and 5,000 individuals working at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport were examined. Criminal history checks were also run on these employees. The records of each employee for whom discrepancies were found were then reviewed by the task force to determine whether criminal charges or referral to another agency, such as the Transportation Security Administration or the Immigration and Naturalization Service, were appropriate. In addition, investigators identified individuals who are fugitives from justice or who have failed to leave or have illegally re-entered the United States after being deported.

Those arrested today were indicted last week on charges that include falsifying security applications, Social Security fraud, and immigration violations such as illegal re-entry after deportation, failure to depart after being deported, and falsifying information to obtain naturalization. Specific charges depend on the circumstances of each case. Maximum penalties range from 2 -10 years imprisonment, \$250,000 fine, and 1-3 years supervised release depending on the charge.

All the defendants but one were arrested at the airports. Arrest warrants have been issued for those who were not scheduled to work today or who did not show up for work this morning. The majority of the employees arrested in this operation worked in custodial, construction or food service jobs at the airports. Passenger services at the airports were not interrupted during this operation.

"Today, we have acted decisively to make our nation's airports more secure. To those

who would do us harm, the message is this: our vigilance is steadfast. We will take whatever steps necessary to make the airways safe for all those who pass through our nation's airports and who travel on our nations' airlines. The Justice Department will enforce the law fully and vigorously to protect Americans," said Attorney General Ashcroft.

Mr. McNulty said, "Today's action enhances our homeland security by cracking down on those with access to the secure areas in our airports. We must take every precaution possible to ensure that air travel in this country is safe. I congratulate the law enforcement agencies who worked in the task force and prosecutors in this District for the hard work and initiative they demonstrated in conducting this large scale operation. Because of this operation, I can report to you now that the two major airports in Northern Virginia are safer places for both the traveling public and the employees who work there."

Kenneth Mead, Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Transportation said: "We are proud to play our part in the effort to ensure that air travel is safe and secure. It is important for the public to know that workers with access to the most secure areas of the airport, such as ramps, gates, and baggage facilities, as well as the planes themselves, are in full compliance with federal laws and regulations."

In addition to those employees arrested today, another 115 individuals from Dulles International and Ronald Reagan National Airports have been referred to the Transportation Security Administration for a review of their security badge status.

Assistant United States Attorney John Morton coordinated the operation on behalf of the United States Attorney's Office.

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